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CONDITIONS IN MOROCCO.

BY PHILIP FRANCIS BAYARD.

MOROCCO and things Moroccan have recently received so much publicity in America as a result of the Perdicaris affair, that it is now hardly necessary to state, as it would have been a few months since in speaking to most Americans on the subject, that Morocco is a land distinct from Algiers both geographically and politically, and, although by geographical position the most western of Moslem countries, she still remains, by her obstinate conservatism and by the spirit of rude independence of the Berber tribes who make up two-thirds of her population, the bulwark of Islam, fanatical and uncompromising.

For many years past, tourists in making a "side trip" in Morocco have wondered how it was that this rich country, lying at the very doors of Europe, and in sight of whose shores passes such an enormous volume of the world's trade, has so long escaped the penetration of the modern world, and occupation and partition by the World Powers. They have almost invariably come to the conclusion (after a day or two spent in Tangier in the company of those cheerful liars, the guides) that the dawn of European occupation is at hand; that to-morrow will see the opening and improving of Moroccan ports;* the day after, the building of roads, bridges, and railways, etc.; and that they are lucky in having reached Morocco in time to see the "real Eastern thing," while Western civilization is thundering at the gates.

* Tetouan, Tangier, El Araish, Rabat, Mazagan, Saffi and Mogador are open to commerce. In all these ports, vessels have to anchor at a considerable distance from shore and discharge their cargo on huge barges propelled by oars. Tangier is the only port that remains open practically the whole year. Landing or embarking at the other ports is often rendered impossible by wind and weather for days or even weeks at a time. The remaining ports, Azila, Mehediah, Azemmour and Agadir, are closed to commerce.

The tourist who has revisited Morocco after an absence of five, ten, or even fifteen years, has found, indeed, signs of the growth of European activity in Tangier and some of the other coast towns; but, as for the penetration of European ideas and methods into the interior of the land, he finds no more sign of it than before, no railway, bridge,* or telegraph,† not even such a thing as a made road. Travel and commerce still wear for themselves across the country irregular and uneven tracks, in summer choked with dust, in winter deep in mire. For want of bridges, travel and commerce, with their trains of mules and donkeys, still wait on the pleasure of the subsiding flood, an hour, a day, or weeks if need be, just as they have done for a thousand years past, just as they expect to do for a thousand years to come. European merchants and adventurers long resident in the country smile incredulously when passing globe-trotters announce to them the impending inevitable transformation of Morocco. The cry of "Wolf! wolf!" invariably followed by the non-appearance of that animal has so often rung in their ears that they have ceased to believe in him. The change that was inevitably impending yesterday, and that inevitably impends to-day, may well continue to impend inevitably forever. Morocco, like the ball sustained in mid-air on the jet of the fountain, ever tosses but falls not into the water below.

As children, we have watched such a fountain with delighted eyes, wondering that a thin jet of water could sustain the ball, and expecting every instant to see it fall. A little to the right, a bit to the left, and the ball must escape; but we have watched in vain for its fall, for, if the jet of water does not fail, the ball may continue to toss forever. Morocco is such a ball. The European Powers are the fountain, and their irreconcilable jealousies have ever been, and may well continue to be, the unfailing jet of water on which the ball maintains

* One can count the bridges in Morocco (outside of Tangier) on the fingers of one hand.

† Tangier is connected with Europe by three telegraphic cables—one English to Gibraltar, one Spanish to Tarifa, and one French to Marseilles *viâ* Oran. Of these, the English is most patronized. The Spanish cable is out of gear on an average of six months in the year. There is an overland wire to Cape Spartel lighthouse, six miles distant, maintained at the joint expense of the Powers represented at Tangier. This lighthouse is, with the exception of Tangier Light, the only one on the Moroccan coast.

itself in mid-air. Of late, the fountain has shown signs of change; and the ball, tossing on a diminishing jet, seems to be at last on the point of falling. So it seems; but there are indications that the jet of water, spouting forth again with renewed vigor, will send the ball tossing merrily upward, high as before.

It is difficult for an American to form a just conception of the conditions of government in Morocco, almost as difficult as it is for a Moor to form an idea of existing political conditions in Christian lands. The Sultan's nominal dominions extend from east to west some four hundred miles, and from north to south some eight hundred and fifty; but his actual authority is exercised only in spots over this vast territory, according to time and opportunity. Following the Moorish expression, the country may roughly be divided into *Blad-el-Makhzen*, or subdued territory, and *Blad-es-Siba*, or unsubdued territory.* *Blad-el-Makhzen* comprises in normal times the inland towns of Fez, Miknas, Marakesh (Morocco city), Teza, Oujdah, El Kasar, Tafilet, and Taroudant and the contiguous plains; also the whole of the Atlantic coast, with its towns, from Tangier to Agadir, and Tetouan on the Mediterranean with the mountainous country bordering the Strait of Gibraltar. All the rest of Moroccan territory, *i. e.*, about three-fourths of the whole, is included in *Blad-es-Siba*. But the boundaries between the subdued and the unsubdued territories are ever shifting according to the relative power of aggression of the Sultan and the power of resistance of the tribes. But, although the Sultan's political authority is so far from being universally obeyed, all Morocco, including *Blad-es-Siba*, reveres him as the religious head of Islam, and pays him tribute, real or nominal, accordingly.

The policy of the Sultans has always been to sow discord among the independent tribes, to set them at each other's throats, and, by throwing the imperial sword into the balance at the opportune moment, to extend *Blad-el-Makhzen* and hold *Blad-es-Siba* in check. Your true Moroccan has respect for but one thing—namely, force. In his eyes, clemency and gentleness have ever been signs of weakness and incapacity. The Sultan who rules by violence and cruel oppression commands the respectful

* *Blad-el-Makhzen*, literally, "government country"; *Blad-es-Siba*, "country without government."

obedience and admiration of his subjects:* he who sought to rule by other means would be regarded as little better than a fool.

We of the Western world who have sought to understand the Moor and to make him understand us, to live his life, to see with his eyes and hear with his ears,—try as we may—have found our efforts all in vain. Between me and my companion, by whose side I have journeyed day after day, who dips his hand with me in the dish, there is a great gulf fixed which I cannot pass, which he would not if he could. He is of the year of the Hegira, 622, and I of the year of grace, 1904. I shall never read his heart aright nor he mine.

“The unfathomable sea and time and tears,
The deeds of heroes and the crimes of kings,
Dispart us, and the river of events
Has for an age of years to East and West
More widely borne our cradles.”

The idea seems to prevail in Europe that, if the Moor could only see what we are pleased to term the blessings of civilization, he would be eager to bring down the shower of blessings that he knows is only waiting for an opportunity to fall upon his country. So he would, if he could look through our eyes; and so we would not, if we could look through his. To him, road, railways and the telegraph mean the entry of the European, the gradual abomination of a Christian occupation, and the establishment of a Christian government. He is willing enough to trade with the Christians, and to let some of them reside in his country to facilitate commerce; he realizes that he could not do without the services of the “necessary,” though not “harmless,” Moroccan Jew; but as for the opening up of the country, the breaking down of the last barrier that protects his ancient mode of life and thought from the threatening flood of foreign abominations, the Moors are practically unanimous in their determination to do all in their power to prevent it. Undoubtedly, Moors of position and influence have expressed a contrary opinion to *Europeans*. A Moor will never say “no” squarely to any man, except it be to one completely at his mercy. In conversation he will be of whatever opinion you please. Thus

* Such a one was Moulai Ismail, in whose reign the English were forced to abandon Tangier (1683). The Moors long spoke of him with affectionate regret.

the French have discovered that, among all Europeans, the Moors find *them* the most agreeable. The English and Spanish have also made the same discovery in regard to themselves. The fact is that, in his heart of hearts, the Moor finds that the most agreeable Europeans are those who remain in Europe, the most disagreeable those who come to Morocco.

At the present moment this distrust and dislike of foreigners is directed principally against the French, who are now, by the Anglo-French treaty (April 8th, 1904), left at liberty, as far as England is concerned, to carry out their declared policy of pacific penetration. This policy can only be carried out through the acquiescence of the Moors themselves; and, as they are determined to resist it by every means in their power, it is evident that real penetration can be accomplished only by the forcible conquest of the country. The fact is that the French are incapable of making a pacific penetration in any part of the world. They can no more make such a penetration in Morocco than they have done in Algiers. The history of their operations for the past seventy years in Northern Africa proves this only too clearly. France will be compelled sooner or later to use force; and in that case, no doubt, England will enter Morocco with her, and Germany (so utterly disregarded by the recent Anglo-French agreement) will not miss the opportunity to take a hand in the game and insist on a suitable share for herself. As for Spain, it appears that, by the treaty signed recently at Paris, the terms of which remain secret, Spanish susceptibilities have been soothed and the Spanish "face" saved. The possible concession of zones of influence or commercial privileges in Morocco that Spain may have received by the treaty may well remain a matter of indifference to the French public. When with grave courtesy you offer to your neighbor, a paralyzed octogenarian, the privilege of mounting your thoroughbred whenever he may feel so inclined, you hardly anticipate that your own use of the animal will ever be interfered with. Spain has held Ceuta on the Strait, and the Zafarine Islands, Melilla, Alhucemas and Peñon de Velez on the Rif coast, for several centuries;* but her influence and authority do not extend for more than the distance of a rifle-shot beyond the walls of these possessions, which serve

* Melilla since 1479; Peñon de Velez since 1564; Ceuta since 1580; Alhucemas since 1673; Zafarine Islands since 1848.

the mother country as penal settlements and the government as places for hungry office-seekers. Spain is manifestly powerless to reap any benefit from a zone of influence in Morocco, or there to establish herself in such a manner as to become in any way a menace to French interests.

The present Sultan, Moulay Abd-el-Aziz, came to the throne in 1894 at the age of fourteen years. For the first six years of his reign, the actual government of the empire was in the hands of the all-powerful vizier, Sid Ahmed Ben Mousa; but, on the death of this functionary in 1900, the young Sultan showed a decided disposition to follow his own inclinations rather than the wishes of his advisers. Among the new ministers called to power after the death of Sid Ahmed, Sid Mehedi-el-Menebhi, as Minister of War, soon became the all-powerful favorite.

The imperial court divides its time between Marakesh (Morocco city) the southern, and Fez, the northern, capital. The periodical presence of the court in both cities and its triumphal progresses across the country produce a wholesome impression on the inhabitants, and cause them to bear in mind the might and power of the imperial government. Another object accomplished by this dual residence is to discourage the attendance on the court of importunate representatives of foreign Powers. Tangier has been assigned to the representatives of the Powers as their place of residence. Here they treat with a sort of imperial delegate unfurnished with plenipotentiary powers. Their claims must constantly be referred to the court at Fez or Marakesh, thus ensuring the workings of a perfected system of procrastination and delay worthy of an Oriental imagination.

In the month of November, 1901, the Sultan, after a sojourn of some years in Marakesh, set forth to return to the North and take up his residence in Fez, making his imperial progress by way of Rabat (on the Atlantic coast), for the direct route to Fez traverses a section of Blad-es-Siba, where His Majesty would have to fight his way through. The Moroccan ambassadors, sent some months previously on missions to Paris, St. Petersburg, London and Berlin, had recently returned and imparted to the Sultan their impressions of European civilization. During his stay of two months in Rabat, he received an English, a French and a German mission. In the wake of these missions, followed a motley crowd of European claimants, commercial agents and

adventurers; and it was then that the Sultan's proclivity for things European first manifested itself in a manner to attract the attention of the outer world, and at the same time to become a source of scandal and offence to his own people. There began that flood of orders for English thoroughbreds, bicycles, automobiles, photographic material, mechanical toys, steam and electrical engines of all sorts, cabs, carriages, narrow-gauge tramways, etc., etc., which, after the court had installed itself at Fez, rose higher and higher, until the apparition of the Pretender, Bon Hamara, among the tribes in the neighborhood of Fez, compelled the Sultan to put a check on his European inclinations.

The pro-European policy, or rather pro-European drift, of the young Sultan, and the internal disturbances of Morocco occasioned thereby, are largely due to the influence of two men, El-Mehedi-el-Menebhi (now in disgrace) and Kaid Sir Harry Maclean. Kaid Maclean, formerly an officer in the English garrison at Gibraltar, held for many years the post of military instructor at the Moorish court. This personage, though not much in evidence during the reign of Moulay Hassan, acquired from the beginning of the new reign a considerable influence over his successor. He gradually became the confidential friend and adviser of the young Sultan, his master of ceremonies when Europeans were to be introduced at court, and a sort of political, commercial, and financial agent for the government. El-Mehedi-el-Menebhi, who was for some time a common soldier in the service of the old vizier, Ahmed Ben Mousa, who exercised what was practically a regency during the first six years of the present reign, was assigned the portfolio of War in 1900, and rapidly became the favorite minister of Moulay Abd-el-Aziz. When Moorish embassies were to be sent to several European capitals in 1901, Menebhi was chosen to head the mission to London, and with him was sent Kaid Maclean. Their negotiations in London were apparently of a nature highly satisfactory to the British government. Upon Menebhi was conferred the Order of St. Michael and St. George, and Kaid Maclean (henceforth Sir Harry Maclean) was created a baronet. It was after the return of this mission to Morocco that the attempt of the Sultan to introduce radical reforms into the administration of his government, combined with his notorious taste for European amusements and the society of Europeans, caused the smouldering

sentiment of protest and revolt among his people to manifest itself in the rebellion of Bon Hamara.

This rebellion, which has now dragged on for more than two years, has only once seriously threatened the existence of the Sultan and his government (December, 1902). Some of the tribes of Blad-el-Makhzen have profited by the occasion to exact arms and money from the government as the price of their loyalty. They have naturally not failed to seize the opportunity to settle old scores between tribe and tribe, and to recommence a system of intermittent brigandage along the caravan routes. In the kidnapping of Messrs. Perdicaris and Varley, we have seen how that intelligent and enterprising individual, Raisouli, even succeeded in making a tool of the American and British Governments to serve his purpose in extorting money and other concessions from the Sultan. But the tribes have so little cohesion among themselves, and so little desire for anything beyond the satisfaction of their immediate local interests, that anything in the nature of a general and concerted movement on their part (except in the case where the imperial government is strong enough to force it on them) is not to be expected. The only thing that could, and would, produce such a movement would be the invasion of Morocco by a Christian foe.

The expenses of the war, added to those incurred to satisfy the vagaries of the Sultan and the covetousness of his viziers, have forced the government to contract further debts, principally with the French, thus strengthening the hands of France in her dealings with Morocco. At the same time, the eyes of the Sultan have been opened to the danger of attempting to force the latest methods of European administration upon a people hitherto living under the patriarchal system of Koranic law;* this would be a pouring of new wine into old bottles with a vengeance, which could only result in disappointment and disaster.

El-Menebhi has been made a scapegoat for the disasters that have fallen upon the government since the "modern" policy was inaugurated. Whatever his faults may be, he is at least not lacking in courage and presence of mind, and it is very doubtful whether his successors will act with any more wisdom and judgment than he.

* The Koran is the basis of Moorish law. The Moorish code makes no distinction between civil and criminal law.

Up to date, the "*pénétration pacifique*" of the French into Morocco amounts to the following: A French company has obtained a contract from the Sultan to build the new custom-house at Tangier. The Sultan has assigned sixty per cent. of all customs dues to the payment of his French debts. A French official has been delegated to each one of the open ports to receive the sums due. The Sultan has been forced into contracting new debts in France. A swarm of French adventurers of all sorts, many of them from the French colonies in North Africa, and among them a fair sprinkling of *bona-fide* settlers with money to invest, lured by the picture held out to them in the French press of a new and rich colony for French colonization, an El Dorado ready waiting to be developed by French enterprise and industry, has poured into Tangier and some of the other coast towns. They have found the cost of living in these towns higher than at home, and the price of real estate as high or higher. They have found that, even where land can be purchased outside of the towns (and the Moorish officials do all they can to prevent its purchase by Europeans), the present insecure state of the country, likely to be prolonged indefinitely, makes the occupation and exploitation of such land absolutely out of the question. Many of these people have already left Morocco in disgust, and not a few have had to ask financial assistance of the French consul in order to return to their homes.

One word more about the Moors. As to the cultured Moors and those whom contact with Europe and Europeans have rendered capable of forming an intelligent opinion in the matter, they seem to think that, in the face of many troubles, internal and external, Morocco will continue to maintain her integrity, in spite of all Christians in general, and of the French in particular. And, as for the great mass of the people, they cherish deep in their hearts that maxim which has always been the solace of the Moor in hours of doubt and disaster: "*Din ennebi irghleb*," "the faith of the Prophet shall be victorious at the last."

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